

Book Reviews

Essential Surgical Technique

C. D. Johnson and J. Cumming, Eds.
Chapman and Hall Medical, 1998.
314 pages; price £24.99.

This book aims to provide a practical guide to Basic Surgical Training (BST). In guiding the reader through the surgical specialities the author's aims are easily achieved. The foundations of surgical instruments, haemostasis, knot tying and tissue handling are initially described, as are the principles of local anaesthesia, sedation and postoperative analgesia. The perioperative management section describes common problems in the surgical patient but does not explore the recent developments in sepsis and the systemic inflammatory response syndrome. There is a useful section on resuscitation techniques utilising ATLS guidelines and the management of problems commonly encountered in the emergency department. The importance and prevention of secondary head injury and the management of the single lymph node in the neck are succinctly covered in the relevant sections.

In the section on cardiothoracic surgery, the authors describe the essential basic procedures but then expand their remit to more advanced techniques. However, basic trainees might not be expected to undertake procedures such as rigid oesophagoscopy, Celestin intubation, or pericardiostomy. The balance of the book is redressed in the final chapters which deal with management of common general, paediatric and urological surgical problems.

This book will be of use to BSTs and could also serve as a refresher for surgeons who are re-entering clinical training after a period of dedicated research. The text is easy to read, well illustrated and uses margin boxes to highlight important points. The book is competitively priced and bridges an important gap between surgical texts for clinical medical students and those aimed at higher surgical examinations.

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Frontiers in Cerebrovascular disease

J. T. Toberston and T. Nowak, Eds.
Futura, 1998.
359 pages; price \$98.

Monographs published by the American Heart Association can always be regarded as state of the art publications and this collection of reviews and essays is no exception, based as it is on the proceedings of the 20th Princeton Conference. The basic science of thrombosis is now so complex that a review such as this is helpful for the clinician who wishes to learn something about important recent developments including homocysteinaemia and adhesion molecules. Cell death, restoration and some of the mechanisms involved in the brain in these processes are reviewed. These are not chapters for the faint hearted looking for the great leap ahead in therapeutics, but a serious dose of "frontier" neuroscience. Discussion of emerging therapy is limited to the risks of intracranial haemorrhage following thrombolysis, with most emphasis on the studies undertaken with rTPA. This is useful so far as it goes, but what is desperately needed is an individual patient meta-analysis of all trials of thrombolytic agents in stroke, rTPA and streptokinase. We then need a large pragmatic clinical trial which will tell us once and for all whether thrombolysis has a place in the management of people with stroke. At \$98 the determined strokologist might just persuade a library to buy this book, but the vascular surgeon could make a better investment elsewhere.

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Stress Echocardiography

Picano E. Ed.,
Springer, 1997.
306 pages; price £45.50.

In his third edition of what is reputed to be a best seller, the techniques, applications, advantages and